

N^o 39

A SERMON

PREACHED

At *ANTRIM*, Nov. 13. 1723

AT A

F A S T

Observed in the PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATIONS in ULSTER, by Agreement of their MINISTERS, on the ACCOUNT

OF

DIVISIONS.

I CORINTHIANS iii. 3.

For, whereas there is among you, Envy, and Strife, and Divisions; are ye not Carnal and Walk as Men?

By JOHN ABERNETHY, M. A. MINISTER of the GOSPEL.

BELFAST: 

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THE P R E F A C E.

I Am Sensible, that in a Time of Division, whatever is Publish'd, that has any Relation to the Debated Subjects; and, with whatever Design Real or Pretended, is, liable to such various Constructions, as the prevailing Humours and Prejudices of the Party's shall direct them to put upon it. Many secret Meanings, and shrew'd Designs, are then made for a Writer, which (perhaps) he never thought of. The following SERMON must take its Fate with others of a like Nature, and Publish'd in the like Circumstances. I would only (for their own Sakes) Advise such as shall think fit to Read it, to consider Impartially, what is said, and Regard it according to the Evidence of Truth, which appears in it, to their Understandings, without giving themselves Trouble about any supposed Views of mine, which are not Express'd, in Imagining which, they may do me Injustice, and I'm sure can do themselves no real Service.

I think it Necessary, to Advertise the READER, that when I give my Opinion in the SERMON, against entering into the Debates of the Party's, my Intention is not to Condemn those of either Side, who shall in a Christian and Charitable Way, lay open the Strength of their Cause, in free Conferences with their Brethren, or more Publickly before the World: I only thought Disputation not proper for a FAST; that being so ill Tim'd, it might tend rather to Inflame, and on that Occasion it was our more suitable Exercise, to consider the Sinfulness of Division, and Joyn together, in Confessing our common Guilt.

It may be thought by some, that I have not my self duly Observ'd this profess'd Caution, when I speak against a Separation of COMMUNION, which is the avow'd Opinion and Practice of some amongst us. To which I Answer, That I did not indeed consider those who Separate as a Distinct PARTY in our Divisions, as it's well known they were not from the Beginning. When the Difference was first clearly Stated at the SYNOD, in the Year, 1721. a Breach of Communion, was so far from being Profess'd by either Side, that it was Expressly Declar'd against by both; and as the DECLARATIONS remain yet unrevok'd, and the MINISTER of neither PARTY (between whom the Publick Controversy principally lay) have, as far as I know, own'd any Alteration of their SENTIMENT concerning them, I thought the DIFFERENCE might be Consider'd in the



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Main as continuing in the same State, whatever Incidental Debates may have since risen. And, therefore, I regarded a Rupture of Communion which has now happen'd among some, as an Extream to which, our CONTESTS have carry'd us, to be Bewail'd in our Solemn Humiliation, rather than as a distinct Branch of the CONTROVERSY, into which it seem'd improper then to enter. May it not be Hop'd, that SUBSCRIBING, as well as NON-SUBSCRIBING Ministers, will agree, in Regretting and Warning their People, against the Offensive Fruits of our DISCORDS, and Separation among the rest: For, tho' Separation for Just Causes, be not only Innocent but Laudable, yet when it is Groundless, it must be acknowledg'd, to be a very Lamentable height of DIVISION.

After all, I Hope those who Separate, have no Reason to think themselves ill Treated in the following Discourse; since they are only Advis'd to re-consider their Practice, and the Principles upon which it is Founded. Their Separation it self is no farther Condemned, than as it is Uncharitable, and how far it is so, themselves are best Judges. For my self, I Believe (Agreeably to the DOCTRINE laid down in the SERMON) all PARTYS are to be Blam'd, and some of those who do not Separate, may be as Guilty of the Sin of Division, as those who do; and to Alledge that the good People who have thus distinguish'd themselves, are under a Mistake in Judgment, will not be thought very provoking; since the diversity of our Opinions and Practices, so Publickly known, (not to speak of any other Declarations,) loudly Proclaims it to the World, That we charge Mistakes on each other; amidst several Objections which I have against the Publication of this SERMON, one Thing which chiefly Encourages me to it, is, The favourable Acceptance, I'm pretty well assur'd of, from the People of my own Congregation, for whose Service it was immediately Design'd, and to them I now Dedicate it.

The Substance of it was deliver'd to them under some Disadvantages, which will not make my Endeavours for their Instruction, the less Acceptable, and having made some few Enlargements, I give them this Opportunity, of Reviewing it Seriously; the Subject being such, as I could wish their Thoughts to Dwell on, especially in the present Juncture. I cannot but give this TESTIMONY to the Generality of them, (and their Example is not Unworthy the Imitation of others,) that they have always Carry'd (and I think they do it more and more,) with all the Respect to my MINISTRY, which I could reasonably Claim, preserving a good MEDIUM between a Blind Submission to the DICTATES of Fallible Men, and those Jealousies and other Prejudices, which might Mar a Candid Reception of Divine Truths.

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when Convey'd by frail and weak Hands ; they never Encroach on my Freedom of Exercising my Ministry, according to the Light of my Conscience, and the best of my Understanding, and always show a just Esteem, for their own Right of Examining Impartially, and Judging for themselves.

May a NOBLE Disposition still grow in them, (as the Foundation of their Increase in Faith and Love,) to receive the Word, with all readiness of Mind, and search the SCRIPTURES Daily, whether those Things (they hear,) are so as they are Deliver'd ; and the LORD OF PEACE HIMSELF, GIVE THEM PEACE ALWAYS, BY ALL MEANS.

John Abernethy.



I Corinthian

I CORINTHIANS iii. 3.

For, whereas there is among you, Envyng and Strife, and Divisions ; are ye not Carnal and Walk as Men ?



THE Apostle Paul, was the first who Preach'd the Gospel at Corinth, and at his Entrance on that Service, GOD gave him great Encouragement, assuring him by a VISION, he had much People in that City *. There he continued a Year and six Months §. And, we may well suppose, such a Wise Master-BUILDER, left his Converts in a good Condition, nothing was Wanting on his Part, to preserve Purity and Peace among them : Yet they soon run in-

to Partys, and a Dismal Scene of Strife and Confusion, was early Open'd in that Church, tho' Form'd according to the Exactest Model, and Furnish'd with the best Directions of an Inspir'd Ambassador for CHRIST. In a very Distracted State they were, when this EPISTLE was Wrote ; yet that must have been but about Three Years after St. PAUL left them : For it was Written while he was at Ephesus, and from Corinth, he went Directly to Ephesus, from whence by the best Computation, he took his last Departure, in little more than Three Years after his first going thither. This Observation, shews how Prone Men are to Faction, even Christians to Schism. Christianity it self, a Divine Institution, not only Pure, but Peaceable, full of Mercy, and good Fruits, which Breaths nothing but Gentleness, Love, Goodness, is not sufficient to preserve those who Embrace it from Discord. Nay, to show the exceeding Sinfulness, and the mighty Prevalence, of a Contentious Spirit ; the Gospel it Self, the Kingdom of GOD is made the very Subject of DIVISION.

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* Acts xviii. 10. § Acts xviii. 11.

As the Differences, and Animosities, among the Primitive Christians, are the unhappy Examples of the same Evils, in latter Times, even in our own : We have this Advantage, that the Apostles of our LORD, by the immediate Direction of His Spirit, have left us the best Antidotes against them, and prescribed the best Remedies for Healing them ; which, therefore, as being Deliver'd by Infal-
 lible Teachers, ought still to be Esteem'd the most Effectual, and to be Preferr'd to all the Methods for Unity and Peace, which have been, or can be Invented by Fallible Men. Particularly in this *E-
 pistle* to the CORINTHIANS, there are such Solemn Warnings given, such excellent Rules laid down, as by a due Application of them, might be sufficient, to preserve the CHURCH from Schism, in every Age. My TEXT leads us into the Secret Springs of Divi-
 sion, and gives such an Account of its Origin, as might well fill every Christian Heart, with a just Abhorrence of it. The Apostle could not have taken a more Effectual and Convincing Way of Reasoning with Men, in whom there were any remains of a True Zeal of GOD, and Sincere Respect to Religion, than to show that the Fault he Reprov'd them for, was an Evidence of the Obstinate De-
 pravity of their Hearts, and proceeded from that Carnal Mind, which it was the very Design of the GOSPEL to Conquer; and which is Directly Opposite to that Spiritual Principle, which Chris-
 tianity was intended by its great Author to Plant in them.

BUT, when he says they were *Carnal*, (and indeed he says it in the strongest Manner, for he puts the Question to themselves; *Are ye not Carnal?* Intimating, that their own Consciences must bear Wit-
 ness to the Truth of his Charge,) we must not Understand it, as if they were wholly so ; That is, Wicked Persons, and altogether under the Dominion of SIN. But there are remains of Corruption in the best, and some are so imperfectly Spiritual, so Weak Christians, that in Comparison not only with the Rule of Religion, but even with the Degree of it, which others have Attained to, they may be; and are Justly Denominated Carnal. In the First VERSE, the Apostle calls these Christians, *Babes in Christ* ; (Designedly Explaining, what he means by *Carnal*,) not as Commending their Sincerity, in which Sense the Apostle Peter Terms all True CONVERTS *New Born Babes*. * But by Way of Just Reproof rather, and Diminution to their Character, they came so far short of what they might have been,

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* 1 Pet. ii. 2,

considering the Means of Instruction, and Sanctification they enjoy'd. I shall first Explain what it is the Apostle here Charges the Corinthians with, *Envy, Strife, and Divisions*.

Secondly, I shall Consider the Force of his Argument, that these Things mov'd them to be Carnal, which was a very proper Dissuasive from them, and a powerful Motive, to their returning to Charity and Peace.

FIRST, *What it is the Apostle here Charges the Corinthians with; Envy, Strife and Divisions*. I do not think we should Consider these Sins Abstractly, but with Respect to the special Occasion Remark'd to, that is, Church-Partys, Form'd under the Celebrated Names of eminent Leaders. The People are not here Charged with Envy, Strife and Division, on Personal and Private Accounts, but as the Followers of particular Famous Teachers; for whose Opposite Pretences in the Church, their Divided Interests and Reputation, their several Disciples Sinfully and Uncharitably Contended.

THAT this was the Matter about which they Divided, is Apparent from the Words immediately following my Text, *While one saith, I am of Paul, another, I am of Apollos; are ye not Carnal?* But what was the Party's Aim at in their Contentions? No doubt they had plausible Pretences, and imagin'd, at least gave out, That Truth, or something they called Religion, was best serv'd on their Side; and in their Way. Without some such Pretext, they could never have Supported themselves; and it is not to be Thought, they would Act so Weak and Irrational a Part, as Barre-facedly to Divide merely for the sake of Division, or to set up the Interests of Men, without so much as Professing a Design, thereby to promote the Superior Interest of Christianity. And, yet by the Apostle's Construction, the Tendency of their Debates, was no more than to raise the Characters and Influence of some, and to Depreciate others. For this, their Affections were Alienated from one another, and the Sacred Bond of Peace broken; for this, there were *Swellings and Tumults* among them; mutual Animosities, and bitter Envyings: They strove Fiercely and Clamorously, to promote the Separate Interest of their PARTYS; and Grieved at the Prosperity of their Fellow Christians, in which they ought by the Laws of the Gospel, to have Rejoyced.

YET it did not appear, that the Differences rose so high, as a breach of COMMUNION. There is no Mention of separate Worship, or divided Religious Assemblies; that was a yet greater Evil,

Evil, which that Apostle Warn'd them of; 1 Cor. xi. 19. He was Inform'd, there were already Schisms among them, Divisions without a Rupture of the Church's External Unity: But by an awful Permission of Providence, and the Natural Tendency of Pride, vain Glory and Envy, (Those Lusts of the Flesh, which had already wrought to Schism) *there will be Heresies*; different Sects Form'd into a Stated Separation of COMMUNION. These should fill our Souls with an Aversion to Schisms, and make us Warchful against the Beginnings of them: Their Natural Progress, is from Evil to Worse; they are an in-let to *Errors*, and all manner of Disorders; and then surely Differences are risen to a shameful Height among Christians, when they cannot bear with one another in Worship, will not Joyn in the same Assemblys, nor sit at the same Sacred Table:

HITHERTO, however the Difference among the CORINTHIANS had proceeded no farther, than to a Dis-Union of Affections, and the Natural Consequences of it, a Turbulent and Factious Behaviour, while they still continued in the same Religious Fellowship; yet even in that Degree, the Apostle Represents it as a very great Evil, it gave great Scandal, and brought Reproach on the Christian Profession, for such an Interpretation would be put upon it, as if *Christians were divided*; which absurd Consequence the Apostle himself Charges upon this very Division at CORINTH, CHAP. i. 13. And how can we bear it, that our Partyings, and calling our selves by distinguish'd Names, casts such an Invidious Reflection on our Blessed Redeemer in the Eye of the WORLD, as if he Taught us not one but many Institutions, different Professions, and different Ways of Serving God, as if His Kingdom were Divided against it Self, as if His BODY were not ONE; Contrary to many express DECLARATIONS of His own WORD: Nay, as if there were a Plurality of SAVIOURS, at least, HEADS and MASTERS of our Religion. These Absurdities, should shame us out of our Discords, which give a Handle for the Imputation of them to our Holy Profession, tho' in Truth it is not Chargeable with them, and since Christianity is so perfectly clear of giving any Occasion for Divisions, on the Contrary, it does Constantly and Uniformly, by the strongest Motives, Press Concord and Union; since our Lord *Jesus Christ*, is so far from giving them any Countenance; they throw the vilest Affronts upon Him, and are most Injurious to His Honour; Representing Him as Divided, and the whole Scheme of the Gospel, as an Inconsistency: Since (I say

it is so, it will become us, to Renounce and Abandon **DIVISION**; and in Order to their being effectually Healed, we ought to enquire into the real Causes of them, which will afford us another strong Reason against them, for they will be found to be our own Sinful Passions, the Carnality of our Minds, which leads me to the

II HEAD of Discourse I proposed, to consider the Force of the Apostle's Argument, that these Things, (*Envy, Strife, and Divisions*) proved the Corinthians to be (as when ever they prevail among Professors of Christianity, they will prove them to be) Carnal, which was a very proper dissuasive from them, and a very powerful Motive to their returning to Charity and Peace.

THE Question he puts, *Are ye not Carnal and Walk as Men?* carries in it the clearest Conviction, and at the same Time, the most Persuasive Force. He submits it to their own Consciences whether their Envy, Strife and Divisions, did not Evidently show them to be Carnal and to *Walk as Men*; and if that were once Granted, what stronger Argument cou'd he use, to bring them off from their Divisions, and engage them to Unite again in Affection and Interest? For surely every Religious Mind, must be Impatient of the Yoke and Power of Sin; and a just Prejudice it is against any Disposition, or any Practice, that it takes its Rise from so Impure a **SPRING** as *the Flesh*.

THERE are two Principles of self-Determination in Humane Nature, our Blind and Brutal Appetites, and Passions, which the Scripture calls *the Flesh*; and Conscience, which as it is Enlightned, Renewed and Assisted by the Grace of **GOD**, is called *the Spirit*. These two stand in direct Opposition, and according to the Prevalence of the one or the other, our State is Determined, That is, we are Good or Bad. But sincere Christians are Imperfect, while they are in this **WORLD**, not altogether free from the Corruptive Influences of the *Flesh*, and therefore they are Represented as in a State of War, *the FLESH Lusteth against the SPIRIT, and the Spirit Lusteth against the Flesh* *. And by the gracious Aids of the Divine Spirit, they gradually grow up into Liberty. But their Progress is in a Rational Way, and it is by a due Improvement of the Gospel-Motives and

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and Means, that their Carnal Affections and PASSIONS are subdued.

IT requires the utmost APPLICATION to *Mortifie the Deeds of the Body*, and that is the Work we ought always to attend, Sensible that we are in continual Danger, especially, because the Motions and Inclinations which arise from the Flesh, are sometimes covered with specious Pretences: They seem to be Innocent, Nay, Laudable. 'Tis a great Point in the Christian Life, and that we may still Approve our selves to GOD, to be able to Discern the Workings of the Flesh, under all their false Colours, to Strip them of their Disguises, that being aware of their Insinuating Tendency, we may be Fortified against them. Perhaps there is not any one Case, where in the Flesh is more Artfully Disguised; and Men are more Apt to be mistaken concerning themselves, thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin, than that before us: When Religion, or something relating to it, is the Subject of Debate, it will be very hard to persuade Men, that their Contentions do not proceed from a Pious ZEAL, when Really they Flow from what the Apostle James calls *Zelos Pikros*, Bitter Envy^{*}. Which is one of the worst Branches of Humane Corruption, and most Opposite to the Spirit of the Gospel.

I SHALL therefore endeavour to Explain the Apostle's Question which contains a strong Argument. And here we must Consider what it is that Denominates Men CARNAL, or which is the same thing what is the Flesh; that we may see how *Envy, Strife and Divisions* proceed from it, or are Evidences of our being Carnal.

I take the Expression, *Walking as Men*, to mean the same Thing the Phrase we often meet with in the *New Testament*, as in the ninth Chapter of this *Epistle*, and Eighth Verse. *Rom. iii. 15. Gal. i.* And diverse other Places, where Commentators observe, that to *Speak and Walk as a Man*, always Signifies to Act, and Speak, and Live as a meer Natural Man, not Divinely Instructed, and Acquainted with the Mind of GOD in His Word, whose Heart is not yet brought under the Power and Influence of Revealed Truths. When therefore the CORINTHIANS are said to have *Walked as Men*, the Meaning is, That in so far as they Indulged to *Envy, Strife and Divisions*, they behaved Unchristianly, and Disagreeably to the *Doctrine which is according to Godliness*; in so far they Conducted themselves by *Fleshy Wisdom*, not that *Wisdom from Above*, which is Pa-

* JAMES III. 14.

and Peaceable, Gentle and Easie to be Intreated, full of Mercy, and Good Fruits *.

THE FLESH Comprehends all the Variety of Appetites and Passions in the Humane Nature, whereby we're Tempted, drawn away and Enticed: By the Conceptions whereof Sin is brought forth. They were indeed Planted in Man, by the Wise Creator, and according to their Original Design, very Useful to the Preservation and Comfort of Life. But in our Degenerate State, they are become the Unhappy Sources of Error, and Snares to us, whereby we are drawn into the Violation of GOD's Law, such a Bias there is on our Minds, (and as the Prophet expresses it, our Hearts are so Weak §.) that we Rashly and Indeliberately give into the Suggestions of Lust and Passion, and suffer ourselves to be Hurry'd by a Blind Impulse, Neglecting the Indispensable Obligation we are under, as Reasonable Creatures, to choose what shall appear to our Understandings best, upon a Rational and Impartial Enquiry, and particularly what shall appear to be Prescribed in the Scriptures the only standing Revelation we have of GOD's Will.

WHATEVER Tendency then we find in our selves to the breach of any Divine Law, they are to be Attributed to the Flesh, and in so far as they prevail, Directing our Conduct, in so far we are Carnal and Walk as Men: Now the Royal Law of Love, being one of the plainest in the Gospel, whatever in our Hearts, or in our Practice, Thwarts and Opposes it, may well be called Carnal; and so the Apostle clearly Teaches us, GAL. v: 20, 21. Where he numbers among the Works of the Flesh, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Envyings: Division is a Complicated Evil, not to be Imputed to any single Lust or Passion. many of them concur to its PRODUCTION.

FIRST, Anger and Hatred (a great and Comprehensive Branch of the Corrupt Principle) are of its very Essence, for the Guilt of Schism certainly consists in Uncharitableness, a Disposition of Mind Contrary to that Love which our SAVIOUR enjoyns His Disciples by His NEW COMMANDMENT. It is not merely a Diversity of Sentiments, in some Things, which the Inspired Writers, so severely inveigh against, by the Name of DIVISION, but is it principally a Separation of Stated External COMMUNION,

* James iii. 17. § Ezek xvi 30.

ON, which (unless it proceeds from Uncharitableness) may be innocent on both Sides, as when a Congregation is grown too Numerous for one Worshipping Assembly, and therefore, Form themselves into Distinct Societies, meerly for better Conveniency in attending publick Worship : Nay, when Separation of COMMUNION is Occasioned by Religious Differences, it may be Necessary and Commendable on the one Part : But it is Alienation of Affections with all the evil Fruit which it produces, which alone, being so directly Opposite to the Spirit of the Gospel, (if no other Corruption of Humane Nature, had any share in it,) is sufficient to show that *DIVISION* must be the Offspring of the Flesh.

ANGER and Hatred, are the Unhappy Sources of many Mischiefs in the World, and of Infinite Confusion in the CHURCH. Instead of Peace and Harmony, with a Numberless Train of Blessings, which would attend them, the effects of Universal Good-Will ; by the Influence of these Furious Passions, the Earth is filled with Contention and Disorder, with Violence, Blood-shed, and Desolation. But in the Church, where perfect Peace and Love ought to Reign, according to the Laws, and the Spirit of its glorious Founder, even there Anger and Hatred have produced *Whisperings and Backbitings, Reproaches and Revilings, Swellings and Tumults* ; and oftentimes such Cruelties and Outrages, as have scarcely been Paralell'd in the World.

THE History of every Age, since the Beginning of Christianity, Justifies this Melancholly Observation, in some Degree or other, and the same Cause will always produce the same Effects ; *For, where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion, and every Evil Work* *. *From whence then come Wars and Fightings among you ? come they not hence, even of your Lusts that war in your Members* † ?

2dly, ANOTHER Member of the Body of Sin, which is a great cause of Divisions, is Pride. This the Apostle JOHN Reckons among the Things of the World, which are not of the Father, but the World §. Nay, where it is Predominant, Inconsistent with the Love of the Father. Now SOLOMON Tells us, Prov. xiii. 10. *Only by Pride cometh Contention* : Other Evils may give Rile to Debates, or Inflame them ; but Pride is the Principal, and most Plentiful Source of them ; especially

* James iii. 16. † James iv. 1. § 1 John ii. 16.

cially Religious Contests are caused or carried to the most Enormous Heights by it ; when Men are under its Dominion, they swell in a Fond Conceit of their own Knowledge, and other Attainments ; they look down on their Fellow-Christians with a Supercilious Contempt, grow Imperious in their Demands of Compliance with their own Schemes and Opinions, and Impatient of Contradiction. A Lust of Domination is very Natural to Man ; and a Rare Thing it is, to meet with Spirits so happily Composed, as to be Content with their own Freedom, without Encroaching on the Rights of others. There is no one Thing that has Occasioned more Misery and Confusion in the World, than an Extravagant Desire and Affectation of Power. What Devastation has it caused in Flourishing and Populous Countries? And made Glorious Contentions for Liberty, Unavoidable indeed, but very Expensive. The same Propensity there is in Christians, and it works the same Way in Religious Societies : Nay, as RELIGION is confessedly the most Excellent, and Important of all Things ; to differ, and thereby to Declare a Mistake in those from whom we differ, is look'd upon as the highest Affront to Men, who have Power in their Hands, and in a peculiar Manner provokes their Resentment. When we suffer under the Invasion of Christian Liberty, we are Apt to make loud Complaints, and severely to Censure Exorbitant Claims of Power in others ; but Experience may Teach us, That a desire to Rule is Natural to Men.

MAY we not find even in ourselves, too great an Inclination to Despise and Treat Injuriously those who have the Weakness or the Vanity (as we are Apt to think it is) to differ from us ? And to what Heights this might Arrive, if we had Power enough, who can Tell ? It becomes us, however, to be Jealous over our selves, and to Watch against the Workings of PRIDE in our Hearts ; to which Principle, 'tis certain, Contentions of every kind, and especially Religious Contentions are in a great Measure Owing.

IN the Primitive and Purest Times, Christians had their Differences about Religious Matters : One Believed he might Eat all Things - another who was Weak did eat Herbs *. One Esleemed one Day above another ; another Esteemed every Day alike †. But what the Apostles especially Blamed, was their Uncharitable Contention, about these

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Matters,

* ROM. xiv. 2. († Ibid. Verse 5.)

Matters ; and 'tis too Apparent, Pride had a share in their Quarrels.

THE *Weak Judged the Strong*, and the Strong *Despised and set at Nought* the Weak, too plain Indications of an *Assuming Temper*. If this Haughty Spirit, began even to Work, even in the Primitive Simplicity, and Persecuted State of the CHURCH : In **T**IMES of Ease and Prosperity, and of much greater Corruption, it grew up to a prodigious Extravagance ; casting off all Regard to Christian Forbearance, indeed, to Humanity it Self, and producing mutual ANATHEMA'S, Nay, BANISHMENT, IMPRISONMENT, and DEATH.

PRIDE especially prevails as a cause of **D**IVISION, in the Leaders of Parties. Men of Aspiring Spirits, put themselves at the Head of Factions, and to support the Interest they Affect to have in the Direction of Affairs, use all their Arts to Engage a Numerous Train of Followers.

HENCE come Tumults ; for often so it happens, that the equally Ambitious Clash with one another ; and thus Peace falls a Sacrifice, to the Party-Interests, and Vain-Glorious Designs of Turbulent Men. But the Followers too may be, (and frequently are,) drawn away with the same Temptation. Having made their Choice, and Devoted themselves to a particular Interest, it becomes a Point of **H**ONOUR to pursue it, and Run down all who Oppose themselves. If the Doctors at *Corinth* were Puffed up, the People are now directly Charged with being *Puffed up, for one against another* ; they Overvalued their several Heads, to the Disparagement of others.

THOSE who set up under the Name of **C**EPHAS, Despised the **P**ARTY called by **P**AUL's Name, and in their Turn were Despised by them.

ONE Woful but Natural Effect of this, is, **P**ARTIALITY ; which is the Character of Carnal Wisdom, but the very Reverse of the Christian Spirit. Corruption and Unrighteousness in Judgment follows it, with Heaps of Scandal and Confusion. Men being *Partial in themselves, and Judges of Evil Thoughts* *, No more consider the Truth and Reason of Things, or the Justice of Causes, but the Interest of Parties. How Natural is it in such a State of Things, and indeed Common, for Men to Blacken the Characters of those who are

* James ii, 4.

of the Side Opposite to their own, to Triumph in their Mis-
carriages, to Exaggerate their real Failures, to Vent groundless Sus-
picions and Jealousies concerning them; while they not only en-
deavour to Extenuate, but Passionately Vindicate the Misconduct of
their *Partisans*; all which too plainly discover a Partial and a Car-
nal Mind.

3dly, Fear, one of the most Enslaving and Misleading Passions, which
frail Humane Nature is Subject to, sometimes Causes, or rather In-
creases Division. When Schisms are Form'd and Countenanc'd by
Numbers, or Persons of considerable Figure and Influence, from an
undue Solitude for their Worldly Interest or Reputation; Many
are carried away with them. When a *Party* is Run down, and Ad-
herence to it is attended with Temporal Inconveniencies, even tho' it
appear to have **TRUTH** on its Side, yet Men thro' the Influence
of this Temptation, are put upon Inventing plausible Pretences for
Deserting it, and Choosing the safer Side of the Debate. Thus the
Fear of Man bringeth a Snare *. We need not much Wonder at this
Weakness of Humane Nature, or that such a Temptation Biasses the
Mind, when we consider, that so great Men as Saint *Peter* and *Barnabas*,
were drawn into a Schismatical Practice, by its Influence. The
Case was this, as related by the Apostle *PAUL*, with his own
Opposition of St. *PETER*, in Defence of **TRUTH** and **CHRIS-
TIAN LIBERTY**. *GALATIANS* ii. 11, 12, 13. *But when
PETER was come to ANTIOCH, I withstood him to his Face, be-
cause he was to be Blamed. For before that certain came from James, he
did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and Se-
parated himself, fearing them which were of the Circumcision. And the other
Jews Dissembled likewise with him, insomuch, that Barnabas also was Car-
ried away with their Dissimulation.* 'Tis True, this Principle will not
Naturally, and of it self alone, produce Envy and Strife: For if
Men who are led into Divisive Measures, thro' Fear, can save them-
selves, 'tis all that Motive Inclines them to Aim at, without Quar-
relling with, or being Injurious to others; but Divisions it will pro-
duce or increase, and those who are thus entered, are often brought
under a farther Temptation; That is, to put on the Appearance, at
least

* *Prov. xxix. 25.*

least of a *Bitter Zeal*, in Order to Establish their Credit more Effectually with the *Party* they had chosen.

LASTLY, The grosser Corruptions of Humane Nature, Covetousness and Sensuality, give Rise to Divisions in the CHURCH. For Proof of this, we need go no farther than the express Declarations of the Scripture ; for there we find, that the vilest *Heresies*, the most pernicious Sects, sprung from this Impure Fountain : The Apostles Represent *Heretics* and *Causers of Division* in their Days, as Men of Profligate Consciences, and of Lewd Debauched Minds, *Serving not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly*, * *Sensual, having not the Spirit* † *Through Covetousness, making Merchandize of Souls* § *Walking in the Lust of Uncleanness* ‡ *Teaching Things which they ought not, for filthy Lucre's sake* ✕ 'Tis no Wonder, that such Wicked Persons, void of all Regard to Religion and Virtue, should endeavour to make Parties for themselves, and to gratify their own Lusts, even at the Expence of Rending the BODY of CHRIST. But Christians ought to be aware of them, and as soon as by their *Fruits* they are known, carefully avoid them, taking heed that they be not Imposed upon, by good Words and fair Speeches, whereby the Hearts of the Simple are Deceived ; and above all Things, Studying to Purge themselves from Lusts, which will make the Unwary an easy Prey to Seducers, drawing them into sinful DIVISIONS, as well as false DOCTRINES. It is on Impure and Corrupt Persons, that *Heretics* practise their Wicked ARTS with Success, they Creep into Houses, and lead Captive filthy Women, laden with Sins, led away with diverse Lusts *.

THUS I have laid before you the Apostle's Argument, and I hope you are Convinced 'tis a very strong one : Besides his Authority, as an Infallible Teacher, which ought to be of great Weight with Christians ; it is Apparent from the Reason of the Thing, that Divisions are exceedingly pernicious, contrary to the True Spirit of Christianity, and in so far as they prevail, certain Indications of a CARNAL Mind. What the inspired Author Aim'd at, was the Uniting of these Divided Christians, in the BOND of PEACE, by Uniting them more firmly in the Faith of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and in a close and immediate Adherence to him, the only Center

* Rom. xvi. 18. † Jude 19. § 2 Pet. ii. 3. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 10, 11.
✕ Tit. i. 11. * 2 Tim. iii. 6.

of Union among Christians : But first they must be Convinced their Contentions were Sinful, and what better Method could he have taken to Demonstrate *that*, than by showing that they were the *Works of the Flesh*?

LET us NOW APPLY this to our Divisions, which take their Rise from the same Spring, the Carnal Mind, and on that very Account ought to be the Matter of our deep Humiliation before GOD. If we are still CARNAL, and in Defiance of the Gospel-Precepts, and Opposition to the Gospel-Spirit, *walk as Men*, That is, Natural Unrenewed Men, I don't know any Thing more justly to be Regretted. For then indeed it is Apparent, that the Word Preached do's not Profit, the Spirit of GOD is grieved, and we may reasonably Apprehend the awful Effects of His Displeasure, because we have received his Grace in vain. We boast of our Education in Christianity, and the Purity of our Profession, which are very valuable Privileges, but they will not be accepted instead of Obedience, nay, will certainly Aggravate our Guilt, if we continue to walk after the Flesh.

I have chosen to Insist on this SUBJECT, with a view to the Healing of DIVISIONS; which I think, cannot be effectually removed, til we are Convinced of their Sinfulness. POLITICK CONSIDERATIONS and ARGUMENTS taken from Interest, may Unite the Members of other Societies; and they may very reasonably have some Weight too in the CHURCH; I'm sure with none more reasonably than with the PROTESTANT-DISSENTERS in this Kingdom, whom Experience and common Prudence may Teach, that their Union is their Strength and Safety, and that Division must render them Weak and Contemptible; and in a great measure Unserviceable to the Common PROTESTANT and BRITISH Interest. But what it may be expected will above all Things prevail with Christians to Unite, is a Sense of DUTY, and that their Dividing is their Sin: Without this, our Wounds will be *Healed but Slightly*. But if a strong CONVICTION be fix'd on our Minds, that our Schisms offend GOD, that all the Steps we take in Divisive Courses are so many Affronts to our REDEEMER, so many instances of Contempt Poured on His Authority, by Violating His Law; this, I hope, will nor fail of restoring Peace, and Cementing us again more firmly than ever.

LET me therefore once more beseech you to consider how many Express DECLARATIONS there are in the Gospel against Divisions

visions, how contrary they are to that which is evidently a great Part of its Design. Think with your selves what Importance to the Interest and Honour of His Religion, our SAVIOUR places in the Union of His Disciples. He recommends it very Warmly, and by many Powerful Motives in His last EXHORTATION §. He Implores it very Earnestly in His last Solemn PRAYER to the FATHER in the Presence of His DISCIPLES which the Scripture relates †. By His Sufferings and Death he intended to gather together in one (not to break into Factions and Parties) the Children of GOD that were scattred abroad ‡. The Spirit the Comforter given as the Fruit of His Exaltation, is the Spirit of Love and Concord. What a Noble Collection has the Apostle given us of ARGUMENT for Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the SPIRIT in the BOND of PEACE? Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. *There is one BODY and one SPIRIT, even as ye are Called in one Hope of your Calling, one LORD, one FAITH, one BAPTISM, one GOD and FATHER of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Since therefore it appears so plainly that it is the Mind and Will of CHRIST we should be United; if the Flesh be that Principle in Corrupt Humane Nature which resists His Grace, His Laws, and His Spirit; it is to that only we must Attribute the Prevalence of Divisions among Christians, and a strong obstinate Principle it is which can Resist such Motives.

THAT there are Divisions among us is too Notorious to be Denied; tho' Parties are Apt to Justify themselves, and think their own Share in them Innocent, yet that there are Divisions, and that the Causes of them are to be Blamed, every one will acknowledge.

To enter into the Enquiry who are to be Charged with Causing our Divisions, to State the Difference between the Parties, to Vindicate the one, and Condemn the other, is not, I think, the Business of this Day; it is our Profess'd Design to judge ourselves, to acknowledge our Sin, and make our Prayer before the LORD our GOD, that we may turn from our Iniquity †. But instead of that, to insist each on our own JUSTIFICATION, and to accuse one another would be the Way to continue in that Division which we ought to lament. Nay, to Inflame rather than Heal it, and according to the Prophet

* John xiv. xvi, xv. † John xvii. 21, 22, 23. ‡ John xi. 52. † Dan. ix. 13

Expression to *FAST FOR STRIFE AND DEBATE* *.

UPON an Impartial Examination I believe it will be found, that we are *ALL GUILTY* in this Matter, tho' *NOT EQUALLY*, and that our Affections have been so far Sinfully Divided, as to afford sufficient Ground for a Joint *PENITENTIAL CONFESSI-ON*. This Way of considering Religious Contentions, my *TEXT* plainly leads us to : And I cannot but think the Apostle's Method of Dealing by the *CORINTHIANS* is a good Precedent for us in Dealing by ourselves : Now he does not Decide between the *CONTENDERS*, he does not Examine their Opposite Pretences, in Order to Judge which was best, or in what Proportion and Degree the several *Parties* were Wrong, as to the Matter in Debate ; but Pronounces them *ALL FAULTY* ; and I know no Foundation upon which that can be supposed to be so Justly done as placing the Common Guilt in that which I verily believe to be our own, a mutual Alienation of Affections, When Parties Differ in their Opinions and Contradict each other, it cannot be but that *ONE* is more Mistaken than the *OTHER* ; but the want of Brotherly Love may be Chargeable upon all. A meer Diversity of Judgment do's not prove them to be *CARNAL*, at least not all of them ; but Uncharitableness do's.

THIS was the Case among the *CORINTHIANS*, and it is the Case among us : The Matters in Difference (if they were Treated with a Christian and Charitable Spirit) wou'd not occasion (I'm sure) such a Breach of Peace as we have reason this Day to Bewail.

I know that Animosities and Uncharitableness, are frequently covered under the Disguise of Zeal, wherein the Mind Intrenches it self against all Efforts to Convince it. When Men are once satisfied they are on the right Side of a Debate, they think they cannot Contend too Earnestly for what they are Persuaded is Truth, nor too Warmly Express their Abhorrence of the contrary *ERROR*. In that Case all *PLEAS* for *PEACE* are regarded as Attempts against Truth, and Exhortations to Charity are Constru'd no otherwise than as persuasives to a Criminal Indifference.

I do acknowledge indeed, that it is the *DUTY* of Christians to Contend Earnestly for the Faith once Deliver'd to the Saints †. Nay, tho' our Zeal should always bear a Proportion to the Importance of the Matter

Matter in Debate, and some Things there are in Religion of such an Inferiour Nature, that the CONCORD and COMMUNION of Christians ought not to be broken, for a Diversity of Opinions and Practices about them; yet no Point of Religious Truth is so Minute that it should be given up for Peace. Such a Peace wou'd be Purchas'd at too great an Expence, we must *Buy the Truth* at any Rate but never *Sell it* *. But surely the Preservation of Truth and Peace are not utterly Inconsistent; if they be, How shall we Understand a great Part of the Gospel? How shall we be able to Reconcile it to it self? I think it will appear very evident to any one who Attentively considers the Strain of the Sacred Writings, that there are some Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity, which are of its very Essence, and wherein, therefore, ALL CHRISTIANS must be Agreed; and some Things more Doubtful and of lesser Importance, wherein THE SINCERE may Differ. In these Inferiour Points, as there cannot be a profess'd Agreement amongst all without Hypocrisy; for Experience Demonstrates that a perfect Unanimity is never to be expected in this World: So such an Agreement cannot be Necessary to the peace of the Church, for Peace on that Foot may reasonably be Despair'd of in this State of Humane Frailty: And then all the Glorious Things which the Scripture speaks concerning Peace and its Amiable Fruits, all the Exhortations it contains to mutual Forbearance, and solemn Dissuasives from Judging and Despising one another on Account of different Sentiments and Practices, must pass for meer Insignificancies.

THE only Foundation, therefore, upon which Peace can be preserved in a Diversity of Sentiments concerning lesser Things, is *Charity the Bond of Perfection*. We find ourselves Obligated to bear with one another, notwithstanding some Failures in Conversation; which are too Observable in us all, and certainly the remaining Mistakes of Judgment in sincere Christians, have as good a Claim to a Charitable Indulgence, as the effects of Humane infirmity in their practice. I wou'd desire no Man to Renounce his *Persuasion* even of the Minute Truth, nor yet to give up his Liberty of openly Asserting and Maintaining it when he finds himself bound in Conscience to do so; Peace, on the Terms of such a Servile Submission or Silence, is certainly not the Peace, which the Gospel so much Commends and requires CHRISTIANS to pursue: Nay, it is built upon the Ruines of Religious Sincerity and the Rights of Mankind. But let us

Speak

Speak the Truth in Love *. Let us Contend for it by Argument and Persuasion only, not with *Envying Strife and Division*, and thus the *Peace of God shall Rule in our Hearts* (and in our Societies) to which we are also Called in one Body §.

I am Sensible after all, that in the present Unhappy State of our Differences, the Minds of some are so deeply possess'd with Jealousy, as to make them suspect every Thing which can be offered for **MODERATION** and **PEACE**, as having an insnaring Tendency to Twist out of their Hands some Truth or important Religious Interest. I will not so much as Attempt to Convince such Persons they may be Mistaken; in which Case however, by their own Principles, they must be very Guilty; for if there be Nothing else to bear them out in the Vehemence of their Zeal, but the Truth of the **TENETS** they Contend for, supposing them to be False, their Zeal must be just as Sinful as it is Vehement.

I will not even Suggest, that their particular Opinions are less certain than the Obligation of the **ROYAL LAW**, tho one would think that might be done without Offence. I shall only Advise them to Consider that there may be an Unchristian Way of Expressing Zeal, and that Carnal Passions often mix themselves with it. A Remarkable Example of this we have in the Zeal of the Disciples against those *Samaritans* who refused to receive our **LORD** into their Village. The Apostles, **JAMES** and **JOHN**, Conceiving a great and just Indignation against Sinners, who Treated their Master so Contemptuously, moved for immediate Vengeance to be Executed upon them (and such a Desire Naturally proceeds from Anger and Revenge,) scarcely (I believe) will it be pretended that in any of our Religious Differences, there is on **EITHER SIDE** so gross an Error as that of the *Samaritans*, nor so heinous an *Indignity* done to *Christ*, as to shut our Doors against Him in Person. But what Entertainment did the Blessed **JESUS** give to the fiery Motion of the Disciples; so far from Approving of it, He turned and Rebuked them, and said, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of.* Luke ix 55. They show'd a very forward Zeal for His Honour, and, no doubt, heartily Resented the Injury done him, which they thought very well Deserved such Exemplary Punishment as was once Inflicted by the means of *Elias's* Prophetick Imprecation for a far less important Cause: But

F

they

* *Eph. iv. 15. § Col. iii. 15.*

they did Discern; that under *this specious Appearance*, their own Passions were secretly Working; fierce Anger which Aims at the Destruction of Men, contrary to the Compassionate Design of our Saviour's Coming, had too great a Share in their Zeal: If the Spirit of *J E S U S* be in us, it does not *Lust to Envy*, and the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of *G O D*, does not Propagate the Gospel, nor Promote the *Righteousness which is of God by Faith* *

B U T since the Sinfulness of Division, as I have Stated it, (and I think Agreeably to the Apostle's Doctrine) Consists in its being a *Work of the Flesh*, That is, its proceeding from our own irregular Lusts and Passions, the Question is, How shall the Charge be fix'd on particular Persons? We cannot enter into the Hearts of Men, and discern the secret Springs of Action in them. I A N S W E R, The Apostle fixes the Charge of Carnality upon the *C O R I N T H I A N S* in their Divisions, by the *F R U I T S* of it, which appear'd in their Behaviour: And where we see the same Effects, we must impute them to the same Cause: Yet I will not insist on the Evidences, which are too plain and publick, of the Carnality of our Divisions; for I Designedly avoid every Thing which may seem to Reflect on particular Parties. But surely mutual Reproaches, Venting groundless Jealousies and Suspicions, & industriously Spreading them to mar each others Usefulness, and even on Accounts which are Foreign to the Matter in Debate, can be Attributed to no better Principle than *our Lusts that war in our Members*.

It will become us, indeed, to judge Favourably concerning one another, and to put the best Construction on our Brethrens Conduct which it will bear. Those Words and that Behaviour, which at first seem to carry too great an Air of Wrath and other Passions, Charity will (if possible) Assign to another & better Cause; and when we cannot help thinking our Fellow-Christians in the Wrong, yet let us make all possible Allowances for the different Opinions of Men, nay, for their Infirmities and Prejudices which are Consistent with Sincerity: Let us by no means Adventure to judge them as Acting Perversely, and against the present Convictions of their own Minds; but rather Charitably hope that with a mixture of Humane Infirmary; which their Conduct too plainly discovers, they are under the Influence of a Contentious Zeal for Truth and Purity, and Indignation against what they Apprehend to be Error, and Dangerous to the Interest of Religion.

B U T

BUT we may and ought to be Severe in Judging ourselves and here let the Words of our LORD to his Disciples be remembred, which I mentioned before, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of.* What if under Pretence of Zeal for the Glory of GOD, and for promoting His Truth, we are breaking His COMMANDMENTS? What if Pride Envy and Hatred cover themselves under the Appearance of Indignation against Sin and Error? Such a Case may very well be supposed: Alas! 'tis too Common; and we have Reason with the most Scrupulous Jealousy to Examine our own Hearts: I leave it to Men's own Thoughts to Accuse them and they will certainly be the best and most effectual Reproofs, which Conscience gives to assist us in Trying ourselves: I will only Suggest,

FIRST, That a Regular Zeal always Studies to Exert it self according to the Direction of GOD's Word. The SPIRIT, that Blessed Religious Principle, which *Lusteth against the Flesh*; acknowledges no other Rule but the Scriptures; and never thinks it self safe in any other Methods than such as are there Prescrib'd. Let us therefore bring all our Measures, every Part of our Conduct in our Divisions, to *GOD's Law and His Testimony* as the only True and Proper Standard, and whatever we do not find Agreeable to that TEST, we may Conclude is Carnal. I do not only mean that we should Examine our Debated Opinions by the Word of GOD, but all the Methods we use for Promoting and Establishing them, and every Step we take in pursuance of them; for the Scripture is the Directory for our Practice as well as the Rule of our Faith. As GOD has required us to receive certain Principles contained in His Gospel, or by Consequence Deducible from it: He has not left it wholly to ourselves, to Choose in what manner the Belief and Profession of those Principles shall be Secured, to Form ourselves and set up separate Societies in His Church upon the Foot of profess'd Agreement in them, and to what heights we may carry our Division from other Christians who differ from us in their Opinions concerning them; in all these things we ought to take our Directions from Him, and His Word is a sufficient Guide to the Impartial and Unprejudic'd.

I wish this were seriously consider'd by those among us who carry their Differences with their Brethren even to the length of Separate Communion. 'Tis true, I do not place the Guilt of Schism meerly or principally in external Separation: I believe there may be Schism without Separation, and Separation without Schism: But such a Separation is always the Effect of Necessity not Choice, and

in no Case can we withdraw from our Fellow-Christians, and be blameless, unless when we cannot continue any longer in their Communion without Sin. Now let such among us as separate reflect Impartially on the Gospel Rules, that they may see whether their Practice be Agreeable to them. I can't find that the Scripture warrants a Separation, except when either sinful Terms of Communion are impos'd, or, *those who are call'd Brethren walk disorderly*, That is, contrary to the moral Precepts of the G O S P E L; or, when they vent and maintain Pernicious Doctrines, subverting Souls, and contrary to the Essentials and Vitals of the Christian Religion, without the Knowledge and Belief of which Salvation can't be obtain'd. None of these things are pretended in the present Case, as the Causes of Separation; those whom some of their Brethren reject do not impose any scrupled Terms of Communion, nor have they vary'd from the manner of Worship hitherto practis'd among us; they are not Charg'd with any Irregularities of Conversation for which they ought to be AVOIDED, nor with Principles which have ever been esteem'd Heretical (as far as I know) by the Primitive or Reform'd Churches. Let such therefore as practise and avow a Breach of Communion, consider seriously on what Foundation they do it, and what Scripture Rules will bear them out in it.

I the rather insist on this, because I'm afraid some look on maintaining or breaking Communion with their Fellow-Christians as a Matter of Liberty, wherein they are under no Law, but that of Christian Prudence, and that they may join or withdraw, as they shall judge most for Edification. That indeed we are so to conduct ourselves in things of an indifferent Nature, is very Certain; and let no Man nor Society of Men pretend to make Laws binding the Consciences of Christ's Subjects where He has left them free: In these Cases let every Christian judge for himself as well as he can, and do or forbear as shall appear to him, all Circumstances consider'd, for his own Edification, and the Edification of others, which I take to be the Scriptural Sense of *Expedient*. But where our Lord *Jesus Christ* has given us a positive Law, there all Questions about Expediency and Edification are superseded, for it can't be suppos'd that such a Law shou'd ever be Inconsistent with Edification; we are indispensably oblig'd to Obey whatever the Consequence be, and such Resignation is due to his Superior Wisdom and Authority, that Humane Prudence ought not to object any Inconveniencies which may be suppos'd to follow. Now that our Religious Communion is an indiffe-

rent Thing, or that in choosing with whom we shall Associate, and from whom we shall Separate, we are under no Gospel Law, but must be determin'd by what shall appear to ourselves Expedient will, I believe, be found a dangerous mistake. Let any one but impartially consider the whole Tenor of the Gospel Declarations relating to this Matter, the Nature of the Christian Institutions, the Qualifications of those who are to join in observing them, the express Rules which are given us to withdraw from those who are disqualify'd for the Tokens of Communion, with a particular Description of their Character; and then let him determine whether we are not bound by the Authority of our Lord Jesus to receive into the greatest Intimacies of our Religious Fellowship, all such (whom Providence gives an Opportunity of Receiving) as make a Credible Profession of Christianity, not contradicted by the Wickedness of their Lives, (even tho' in some lesser things they may differ from us (unless an insuperable Obstacle be laid in the way on their Part, by their requiring some Term of Communion which we can't in Conscience comply with. Shall we then take upon us to exclude our Brethren, whom CHRIST has commanded us to receive, but not to doubtful Disputations? Shall we upon Pretence of securing Truth more effectually, or promoting Edification, forsake the Communion of those, who are not disqualify'd according to the Gospel Rules; Rules as particular and express, as the Wisdom of Christ judg'd Necessary, for Preserving the Purity and promoting the Edification of His Church? Do's it not rather become us to think that these valuable Ends will be best serv'd by Conforming ourselves to the Redeemer's Laws? And to attempt the Preservation of Purity by Methods which He has not prescrib'd, nay, Inconsistent with those He hath prescrib'd, or to speak in the plainest Terms, to secure Orthodoxy by narrowing Christian Communion more than the Rules of God's Word require or allow, is to be wise above that which is Written. Besides if Men do not think themselves oblig'd to maintain Christian Communion in the Latitude which the Scripture enjoins, I can't see where they will stop in making their Inclosures. Upon every Difference in the minutest Points, under the pretence of securing Truth, and for their Brother's Edification, they may set up separate Societies (and such Differences are always to be expected, if an Impartial Search after Truth be allow'd) And thus upon this Principle no Limits can be set to Separation,

paration, but Divisions and Subdivisions in the **CHURCH** will be encreased without Measure and without End. *

I propose 2dly, that in order to our knowing the Temper of our own Spirits, and the Nature of our Dividing Zeal; in which Men are so apt to deceive themselves, we should carefully consider the Working of our Minds, whether they be calm and dispassionate, or attended with violent Emotion : The Dispositions which take their Rise from the Flesh are tumultuous, and have a Tendency to overbear and weaken Reason, so that the Mind is thrown into Transports and Disorders, and is acted upon and impetuously driven rather than freely Acts upon a deliberate View of just Motives : But the Operations of the **SPIRIT**, the better Principle, being directed by the Understanding, the Composure of the Mind is preserv'd in them with its Strength, and Vigor ; and the Exercise of all its Powers is Regular and Undisturb'd. In this consists the very health of the Soul, which in such a happy Constitution and due use of its Faculties, comfortably enjoys its own Existence, and the Dignity of an Intelligent Being, and 'tis absolutely Necessary to sincere Religion, which in every branch of it is a **REASONABLE SERVICE**, not the Product of blind Passions, attended with a hurry and perturbation of Thought, but it Springs from Light ; for as the Apostle expresses, 'tis according to Knowledge, is exercis'd with Freedom, and accompany'd with Sedateness and Serenity of Mind. One would think a Man who is accusom'd to reflect on himself, may be able to discern, whether his own Actings have those Characters, and Consequently how far they are Sincere ; and there is no Case wherein we have great-

* **WHAT** I have said on this Subject is perfectly Agreeable to the Doctrine of the Westminster Confession, Ch. 26. Art. 2. in those Words, "Saints by Profession are bound to maintain an holy Fellowship and Communion in the Worship of **GOD**, and in performing such other Spiritual Services; as tend to their mutual Edification, as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several Abilities and Necessitys. Which Communion as **GOD** offereth Opportunity, is to be extended to all those, who in every place call on the Name of our **LORD JESUS**." Nothing can be more evident (and the Texts of Scripture Noted by the Assembly for the Proof of their Doctrines plainly shew it) than that the Communion here spoken of is external ; for it is in Worship and such Spiritual Services, as tend to mutual Edification. Which Communion (in Worship and Spiritual Services, tending to mutual Edification, as well as in relieving each other in outward things) is to be extended to all who in every place **CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS** ; That is, all who make a Credible Profession of Christianity, and whom we must in the Judgment of **CHARITY** believe to be sincere in their Faith and Worshipping the **LORD JESUS**. And I hope none of the Parties among us are so far gone in Uncharitableness as not to comprehend their Brethren who differ from them under that Character.

er need to be Watchful over ourselves, and strict in examining by this Rule, *What manner of Spirit we are of*, than in our Zeal. Mr. Baxter some where makes a very good Observation concerning Zeal to this purpose ; There is a kind of it which do's not appear to be a fruit of the Spirit, because Humane Nature Corrupt as it is, is Prone to it of its own accord; it do's not need Excitation, as it doth to every good Work but easily runs into high Degrees of it, so that it needs rather to be retrench'd and abated. Such a Resentment against other People's Faults, as has too much in it of the *Wrath of Man* is Natural to us ; we need be at no Pains to stir up our Minds to it ; rather 'tis obvious to every Conscientious Person, there's a Necessity of assing Endeavours to cool and moderate it. But another kind of Indignation there is against the Sins of others, as well as our own ; in which there is no danger of exceeding, as it flows from Charity and a Pure disinterested *Zeal of God*, is produced by the Influence of the Gospel Motives, and is regular and dispassionate in its Exercise. It will require a great Deal of Application to work up our Minds to such a Measure of it as becomes us. I leave it to the good People on both Sides of the present Controversies, whether they have not Zeal enough in all Conscience against each other's Way, whether they can't help being afraid, in their sober & solitary Reflections of an Excess; and therefore whether they have not Cause to suspect too great a Tincture in it of remaining Canality ?

If upon an Impartial Examination we are convinc'd, that our Divisions have been, and are sinful, that in our Debates there have been *Envyings and Strifes*, the Fruits of the Carnal Mind, let us unfeignedly repent towards God, and forsake these Sins ; in order to which we ought to confess them with *Sorrow after a Godly Sort*. This is what good Men need not be Press'd to ; if thro' Prejudice and Inadvertency, under whatever Pretence they have been led into sinful Measures, as soon as they are Sensible of their Errors, it can't be but they will regret and abandon them. And let us heartily join together in bewailing all the Sins of all Parties in our Divisions, considering them as reproachful to our Common Profession, and dishonouring to our Common LORD. Sincere Christians endeavour calmly, reflecting on their own Sins as Indignities done to God, and Breaches of His Law, to work up their Minds to an ingenuous penitential Grief. In the same manner let us, loving our *Neighbours as ourselves*, consider their Faults, still taking Care as much as possible, to leave out of the Person's Character the Idea of an Adversary, and out of the Offence the Idea of an Injury ; and even where that can't be done, 'twill be

a noble Return, freely forgiving the ill Usage we meet with, to regret the Trespases of our Brethren, as Affronts to the Majesty of GOD, and Wrongs to their own Souls : Thus shall we bear one another's Burthens, and so fulfil the Laws of Christ *.

BUT our bewailing Divisions, our Humiliations for them, and the bitterest Invectives we can bestow upon them, will signify nothing, unless we Renounce them in our Hearts and in our Practice, exercising Charity out of a pure Heart and a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned †. The great Duty of Christians at all times, and particularly in a Divided State of the Church, is to follow Charity and Peace with them that call on the Lord §. Tho' we act in a narrow Sphere, and may think our Endeavours can't be very extensively Useful for healing publick Breaches; yet besides that we know not how far, by the Blessing of God, the Influence of private Examples may reach, it we purify our Souls, by obeying the Truth, thro' the Spirit unto unfeigned Love of the Brethren, and love one another with a pure heart fervently ‡. And if according to the Natural Tendency of that Blessed Principle, we shall be always ready to do every Thing in our Power for cultivating a good Agreement with our Fellow-Christians (still preserving our Adherence to Truth, and the sole Authority of Christ Inviolable) we shall have Peace in our own Consciences, and they not Condemning us for the Sin of DIVISION, which principally consists in Uncharitableness, we shall have Confidence towards God.

I know nothing better I could choole to Conclude with, in order to leave a good Impression on your Minds, and to Direct and Excite you to do all you can for healing Divisions, than the Apostles excellent Description of CHARITY, in the 13th Ch. of this Ep. to the Cor. vers. 4, 5, 6, 7, 13. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envyeth not; Charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up, doth not behave it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity.

* Gal. vi. 2. † 2 Tim. ii. 22. § 1 Per. i. 22.



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